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CRIME AND SAFETY

A national household survey on crime and safety was conducted in April 1998. The Crime and Safety Survey was conducted principally to obtain information on the level of victimisation in the community for selected offences. Information was collected from individuals and households about their experience of selected crimes, whether these crimes were reported to police and crime related risk factors. The characteristics of offences refer to the most recent incident experienced by the victim.

For household crimes, information was collected on households that had experienced a break-in to their dwelling, that had found signs of an attempted break-in, and that had any motor vehicles stolen in the 12 months prior to the survey.

For personal crimes, information was collected on individuals who had experienced being physically attacked or threatened with violence when someone stole or tried to steal property from them (robbery), and on individuals who had force or violence used, attempted, or threatened against them (assault) in the 12 months prior to the survey. For females aged 18 years and over, information was also collected on sexual assaults experienced in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The level of victimisation can be measured in more than one way. The most common measure derived from crime victims surveys is **prevalence**, that is, the number of the relevant population that have been victims of a given offence at least once in the reference period.

Rates of prevalence are often used, and these are generally expressed as a percentage of the total relevant population. Prevalence rates are also given as a rate per 1,000 households or persons as relevant.

HOW MANY VICTIMS OF CRIME ARE THERE?

Households and individuals in Australia experience a diverse range of crimes, only a few of which were covered by the Crime and Safety Survey.

In the 12 months prior to the 1998 Crime and Safety Survey, there were an estimated 349,900 households in Australia which had at least one break-in to their home, garage or shed (graph 11.4 and table 11.5).

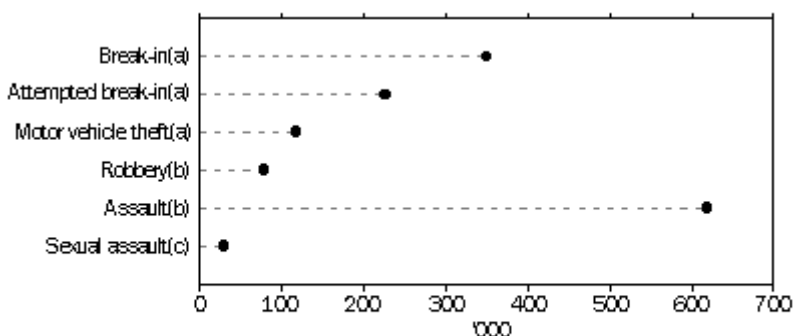
About 226,400 households found signs of at least one attempted break-in, and a total of 534,100 households were victims of either a break-in or an attempted break-in in the 12 months prior to the survey.

About 117,900 households experienced at least one motor vehicle theft in the 12 months prior to the survey.

An estimated 79,100 persons aged 15 years and over were victims of robbery and 618,300

persons aged 15 years and over were victims of assault in the 12 months prior to the survey. An estimated 30,100 females aged 18 years and over were victims of sexual assault in the same time period.

11.4 HOUSEHOLD OR PERSON VICTIMS OF CRIME—12 Months Prior to April 1998



(a) Households. (b) Persons aged 15 years and over. (c) Females aged 18 years and over.
Source: Crime and Safety, Australia, April 1998 (4509.0).

11.5 VICTIMS OF CRIME - 12 months Prior to April 1998

	Victims	Relevant populations	Victimisation prevalence rates	
			1993	1998
	'000	'000	%	%
Break-in(a)	349.9	7,031.2	4.4	5.0
Attempted break-in(a)	226.4	7,031.2	3.1	3.2
Break-in/attempted break-in(a)	534.1	7,031.2	6.8	7.6
Motor vehicle theft(a)	117.9	7,031.2	1.7	1.7
Robbery(b)	79.1	14,456.0	..	0.5
Assault(b)	618.3	14,456.0	..	4.3
Sexual assault(c)	30.1	6,937.4	0.6	0.4

(a) Households. (b) Persons aged 15 years and over. (c) Females aged 18 years as over.

Source: Crime and Safety, Australia, April 1998 (4509.0).

HAS THE LEVEL OF CRIME INCREASED?

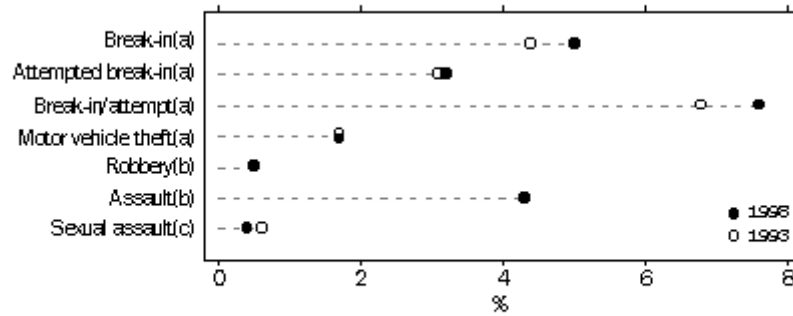
A previous Crime and Safety Survey was conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 1993. Where data could be compared, the prevalence of victimisation for offences was similar.

The 1998 prevalence rates for household break-ins and attempted break-ins are slightly higher than the rates in 1993 (graph 11.6). The prevalence rates for household motor vehicle theft are much the same.

In 1998 the prevalence rate for sexual assault for females aged 18 years and over was slightly lower than in 1993.

It is not possible to compare the personal crimes of robbery and assault between the 1993 and 1998 surveys because of changes to the questions used in the survey.

11.6 VICTIMISATION PREVALENCE RATES—12 Months Prior to April 1993 and 1998



(a) Households. (b) Persons aged 15 years and over. No 1993 rate has been provided as data are not comparable between 1998 and 1993 surveys. (c) Females aged 18 years and over.
Source: *Crime and Safety, Australia, April 1998 (4509.0)*.

HOW MUCH OF THIS CRIME IS REPORTED TO THE POLICE?

Crime is not always reported to the police, and many factors influence whether or not a crime is reported. In particular, rates of reporting to the police vary depending on the type of offence.

For household crimes, the 1993 and 1998 surveys found almost no difference in the level of reporting of the most recent incident to the police (graph 11.7 and table 11.8). In 1998 there was a slightly higher rate of reporting of sexual assaults to the police than in 1993.

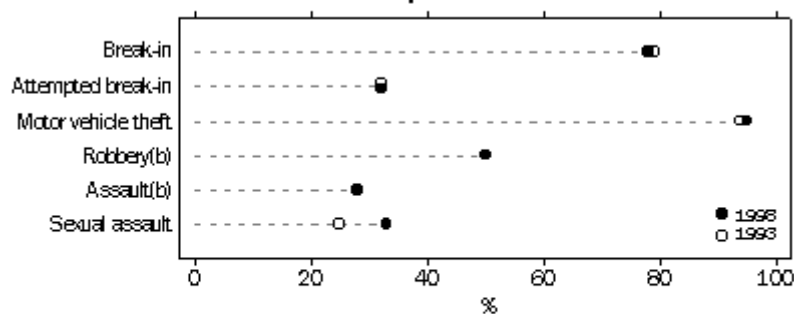
Both surveys showed that most vehicle thefts are reported to the police, with over 95% of household victims of motor vehicle theft reporting the most recent theft. The 1998 survey found that there were about 133,700 motor vehicle thefts in the 12 months prior to the survey. Of these, 130,800 became known to the police, a reporting rate of 98% of all motor vehicles stolen.

About 78% of household victims of break-ins reported the most recent incident to the police. Common reasons for not reporting the most recent incident were a feeling that there was nothing the police could do, and that the incident was too trivial.

Half of the victims of robbery reported the most recent incident to the police, the most common reasons for not reporting also being a feeling that there was nothing the police could do, and that the incident was too trivial.

Only 28% of assault victims and 33% of sexual assault victims reported the most recent incident to the police. Common reasons for not telling police about the most recent assault were that the incident was too trivial and that it was a personal matter. These were also common reasons for not reporting sexual assaults.

11.7 REPORTING RATE(a) TO POLICE FOR THE MOST RECENT INCIDENT— 12 Months Prior to April 1993 and 1998



(a) Of household/person victims. (b) No 1993 rate has been provided as data are not comparable between 1998 and 1993 surveys.

Source: Crime and Safety, Australia, April 1998 (4509.0).

11.8 REPORTING RATES TO POLICE FOR THE MOST RECENT INCIDENT - 12 Months Prior to April 1993 and 1998

	12 months to April 1998			Reporting rates(a)	
	Told police '000	Did not tell police '000	Total victims '000	1993 %	1998 %
Break-in(b)	271.0	78.9	349.9	78.5	77.5
Attempted break-in(b)	71.7	154.7	226.4	32.3	31.7
Motor vehicle theft(b)	112.1	5.8	117.9	93.7	95.0
Robbery(c)	39.4	39.7	79.1	..	49.8
Assault(c)	171.3	447.0	618.3	..	27.7
Sexual assault(d)	9.8	20.3	30.1	25.0	32.6

(a) The number of victims who told police about the most recent incident as a percentage of the total number of victims for each offence. (b) Households. (c) Persons aged 15 years and over. (d) Females aged 18 years as over.

Source: Crime and Safety, Australia, April 1998 (4509.0).

HOW LIKELY AM I TO BE THE VICTIM OF A CRIME?

Household crime

In the 12 months prior to the 1998 survey, 50 in 1,000 households in Australia were victims of at least one break-in, 32 in 1,000 households were victims of at least one attempted break-in and 76 in 1,000 households were victims of a break-in or attempted break-in, or both. About 17 in 1,000 households were victims of motor vehicle theft in the 12 months prior to the 1998 survey.

One parent households and single person households had higher victimisation prevalence for break-in/attempted break-in. In the 12 months prior to the survey, 113 out of 1,000 single parent households were victims of at least one break-in/attempted break-in, as were 85 out of 1,000 people who lived alone. This compares with 59 out of 1,000 couple only households and 69 out of 1,000 households comprising couples with children, which were victims of a break-in/attempted break-in in the 12 months prior to the survey.

On the basis of logistic regression analysis, each of the following types of households had a significant association with increased risk of break-in, compared to households without these characteristics, when other factors included in the model were held constant:

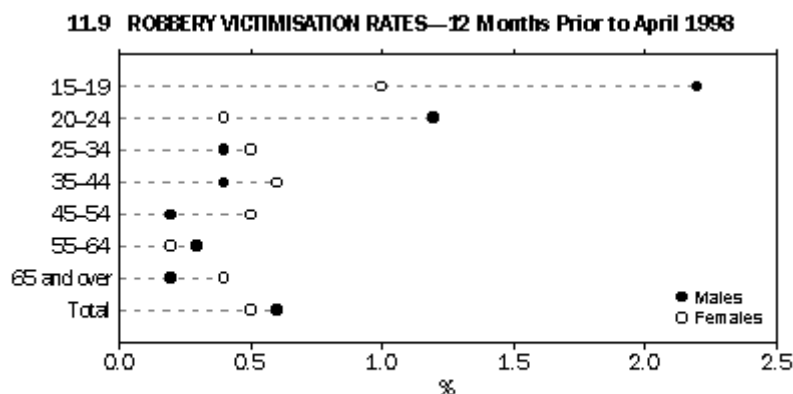
- one parent households;

- households with dwellings where there were large amounts of motor vehicle traffic in the street;
- households with dwellings next to laneways and bicycle paths;
- households in areas with 10% or more unemployed persons;
- households in areas with 9% or more of males aged 15-24 years; and
- households in cities and towns with a population of 8,000 persons or more.

Households with persons aged 55 years and over had a lower risk of break-in victimisation than other households.

Personal crime

In the 12 months prior to the 1998 survey, about 5 in 1,000 persons aged 15 years and over were victims of robbery. Young males aged 15-24 years had a relatively high prevalence of victimisation for robbery (22 out of 1,000 males aged 15-19 years were robbery victims, as were 12 out of 1,000 males aged 20-24 years). Young females aged 15-19 years also had a relatively high prevalence of robbery victimisation (10 out of 1,000 females aged 15-19 years were robbery victims) (graph 11.9).

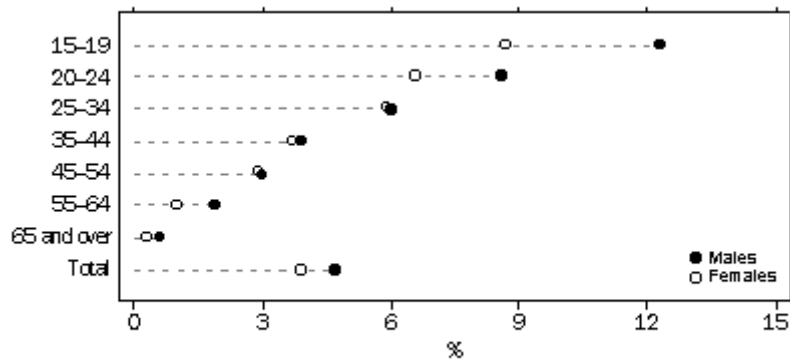


Source: Crime and Safety, Australia, April 1998 (4509.0).

Of persons aged 15-24 years, males were much more likely to be victims of robbery; of persons aged 25 years and over, females were more likely to be victims. For example, 4 out of 1,000 females aged 65 years and over were victims of robbery, compared with 2 out of 1,000 males in the same age group.

About 43 in 1,000 persons aged 15 years and over were victims of assault in the 12 months prior to the survey. Males comprised just over half (54%) of all assault victims, and had higher victimisation prevalence rates than females for all age groups, particularly for those aged under 25 years (graph 11.10).

11.10 ASSAULT VICTIMISATION RATES—12 Months Prior to April 1998



Source: Crime and Safety, Australia, April 1998 (4509.0).

About 4 in 1,000 females aged 18 years and over were victims of sexual assault in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The highest victimisation prevalence rates for sexual assault were for females aged 18 and 19 years (25 in 1,000 women of these ages reported being a victim of sexual assault).

Divorced and separated females aged 18 years and over also reported higher than average levels of sexual assault (12 in 1,000 divorced females and 16 in 1,000 separated females).

HOW LIKELY AM I TO BE ASSAULTED BY A STRANGER?

Most victims of robbery reported that they were assaulted by a stranger in the most recent incident. About 4 in 1,000 persons aged 15 years and over were robbed by a stranger, and one in 1,000 was robbed by someone they knew.

Most victims, however, were assaulted in the most recent incident by someone they knew (about 27 people in 1,000). Of these, about 10 people in 1,000 were assaulted by a partner, ex-partner or other family member. A further 16 people in 1,000 were assaulted by someone they did not know or did not know personally.

Most females aged 18 years and over who indicated that they had been a victim of sexual assault were assaulted by someone they knew in the most recent incident (about 3 females in 1,000). One female in 1,000 aged 18 years and over was sexually assaulted by someone unknown to her.

WHERE DOES CRIME OCCUR?

The most common location for the most recent incident of robbery was in the street or other open land (34% of all most recent incidents), followed by in homes (21%), at the victim's place of work or study (12%) and at shopping centres (11%).

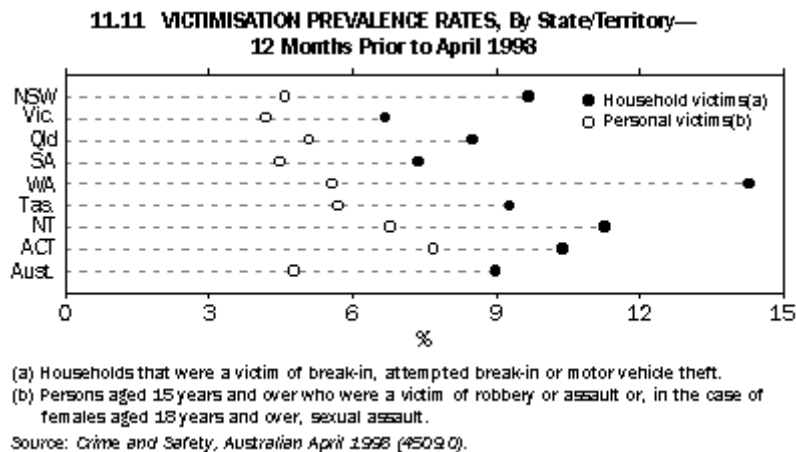
For the most recent incidents of assault, 24% were classed as family violence, with the offender being a partner or ex-partner of the victim, or a member of the victim's family, regardless of where the incident occurred. Another 24% of incidents were home based, with an offender other than a partner or ex-partner of the victim, or a member of the victim's family. A further 15% of most recent incidents were classed as work/study violence, 14% as street violence and 12% as pubs/clubs violence.

Some 58% of the most recent incidents of sexual assault occurred in homes, and 14% in the street or open land.

WHERE IS THE SAFEST PLACE TO LIVE?

Victoria had the lowest proportions of both household and personal crime victims (graph 11.11). The proportions of household and personal crime victims in South Australia were also relatively low.

Western Australia had the highest proportion of household crime victims, and the Australian Capital Territory had the highest proportion of personal crime victims.



Western Australia had the highest victimisation prevalence rates for break-in and attempted break-in (124 households in 1,000), followed by the Northern Territory (108 households in 1,000) and the Australian Capital Territory (91 in 1,000). Victoria had the lowest prevalence rates for these crimes (53 households in 1,000).

Rates for motor vehicle theft were highest in Western Australia (24 households in 1,000) and New South Wales (21 in 1,000), all other States and Territories having rates lower than the national average (17 in 1,000).

Both the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory generally had high prevalence rates for personal crimes. About 69 people in 1,000 aged 15 years and over experienced at least one assault in the 12 months prior to the survey in the Australian Capital Territory, as did 63 people in 1,000 in the Northern Territory. Victoria had the lowest prevalence rate for assault, with 38 in 1,000 people indicating they had been victims of at least one assault.

**11.12 VICTIMISATION PREVALENCE RATES(a), By State/Territory and Type of Crime -
12 Months Prior to April 1998**

	NSW %	Vic. %	Qld %	SA %	WA %	Tas. %	NT %	ACT %	Aust. %
Households									
Break-in	5.3	3.6	5.4	4.0	7.5	5.0	6.3	5.8	5.0
Attempted break-in	3.4	2.1	2.9	2.9	6.0	3.6	5.0	4.0	3.2
Break-in/attempted break-in	7.9	5.3	7.7	6.3	12.4	8.1	10.8	9.1	7.6
Motor vehicle theft	2.1	1.6	1.1	1.2	2.4	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.7
Total household victims(b)	9.7	6.7	8.5	7.4	14.3	9.3	11.3	10.4	9.0
Persons									
Robbery(c)	0.9	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.6	1.0	0.6	0.5
Assault(c)	3.9	3.8	4.8	4.2	4.9	5.1	6.3	6.9	4.3
Sexual assault(d)	0.3	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.9	0.4
Total personal victims(b)	4.6	4.2	5.1	4.5	5.6	5.7	6.8	7.7	4.8
Victims of household and/or personal offences(b)(e)	13.1	10.4	12.6	11.2	18.2	13.8	17.9	15.6	12.8

(a) Proportion of all households or persons as appropriate. (b) Total is less than the sum of the components as households or persons may be victims of more than one type of offence. (c) Persons aged 15 years and over. (d) Females aged 18 years and over. (e) Persons who were victims of any of the personal crimes or who lived in victim households.

Source: Crime and Safety, Australia, April 1998 (4509.0).

CONCERNS ABOUT CRIME AND OTHER PUBLIC NUISANCE PROBLEMS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Overall 27% of persons aged 15 years and over did not perceive that there were any crime or public nuisance problems in their neighbourhood. However, only 9% of persons who had been victims of the crimes covered in this survey thought that there were no problems in the neighbourhood.

The most commonly perceived problem was housebreaking/burglaries/theft from homes, 44% of persons perceiving this as a problem. Other commonly perceived problems were dangerous/noisy driving (34% of all persons), vandalism/graffiti/damage to property (25%), and car theft (21%).

Persons aged 65 years and over were more likely to perceive that there were no crime or public nuisance problems in their neighbourhood. Fewer people aged 65 years and over perceived any of the issues as problems. For many of the issues, proportionally more people aged 15-19 years perceived them as problems.

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